DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 457 EC 162 735

AUTHOR Gillis-Olion, Marion; Olion, LaDelle
TITLE Providing Inservice Training to Paraprofessionals, Regular and Early Childhood Educators Who Are Unprepared to Work with Mainstreamed Handicapped Children.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 22p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Competency Based Teacher Education; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Individualized Education Programs; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Mainstreaming; Paraprofessional School Personnel; Program Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Paraprofessional Training

ABSTRACT

A successful 3-year inservice training program for paraprofessionals, regular and early childhood educators was based on a modularized competency training model. Three modules were developed for each training group, with content including theoretical foundations, attitudes toward handicapped students, legislation, and planned observations of handicapped children in the classroom (module I); observation and recordkeeping, development of Individualized Education Programs, development of teaching strategies based on diagnostic profiles (module II); and behavior management, resources, team participation skills (module III). The program featured training activities as well as on-site visitations to program participants by the program coordinator. Participants were found to be more confident, made positive changes in their methods of discipline, improved in their ability to observe and informally diagnose, and increased their ability to design and implement educational programs for handicapped as well as normal students. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED245457

Providing Inservice Training to Paraprofessionals, Regular and Early Childhood Educators Who are Unprepared to Work with Mainstreamed Handicapped Children

by

Marion Gillis-Olion, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

and

Director of the Preschool Learning Center
Fayetteville State University
Fayetteville, North Carolina 28301

and

LaDelle Olion, Ph.D.

Professor of Education
Office of Graduate Studies
Fayetteville State University
Fayetteville, North Carolina 28301

EC162735

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
LaDelle Olion
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Abstract

With the full implementation of public law 94-142 and a corollary mandate to integrate children with handicaps into the educational mainstream, new demands continue to be made on regular classroom educators. The purpose of the present article is to aid inservice trainers, school system personnel, and service agencies to meet the mandate by describing a successful inservice training program for teachers (paraprofessional, regular, and early childhood) that are unprepared to work with handicapped children in the regular classroom.

The present article is organized into nine parts. The first five sections describe the program goals and objectives, training modules used, training activities, and on-site visitation to program participants. Sections six and seven describe the evaluation of program participants and evaluation of the training by program participants. The final two sections include a discussion and some recommendations for future inservice training efforts.

Providing Inservice Training to Paraprofessionals, Regular and Early Childhood Educators Who are Unprepared to Work with Mainstreamed Handicapped Children

With the full implementation of public law 94-142 and a corollary mandate to integrate children with handicaps into the educational mainstream to the maximum extent possible, continued demands are being made on regular classroom educators (Mori, 1979). While some regular educators appear willing to accept their new roles, a large number are concerned over their lack of training in working with children with handicaps (Flynn, Gacka, & Sundean, 1978; Ryor, 1978; Alberto, Castricone, & Cohen, 1978; and Little, 1977). Moreover, a past president of the National Education Association has even indicated that the whole intent of mainstreaming and public law 94-142 could be destroyed if regular classroom teachers are not properly trained and do not possess positive attitudes toward mainstreamed learners with handicaps (Ryor, 1978).

In an effort to aid inservice trainers, school system personnel, and agencies that will be involved in future training efforts, the present article will briefly describe a successful inservice training program for paraprofessionals, regular (Grades K-3) and early childhood educators (Grades 4-12). Additionally, the authors will discuss the results and implications of this three-year training effort for future inservice training programs.

Program Description

A modularized competency based training model was used to provide academic instruction to 90 program participants over a three-year period. An average of 30 participants were trained annually in the program (see Table 1). Participants were selected by school superintendents from classroom personnel employed in public school systems throughout eight (8) school districts. Special preference was given to educational personnel that had little or no training in special education and that had mainstreamed children in their present classroom.

Selected participants received a stipend of $90 dollars to help defray traveling expenditures to and from the training site. All participants received 50 hours of individualized training on theoretical and practical issues relating to mainstreamed students, 10 hours of in classroom observation, consultation and evaluation, and 9 to 12 hours of inservice training by state and social service agency consultants.

Insert Table 1 about here

Training took place from September through March of each year. Theoretical background and the majority of the training took place on the campus of a small University during the evening hours (5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.). Each of the three groups of participants (paraprofessionals, early childhood educators, and regular educators) met separately in one small group session per month and all of the participants met once a month as a total group. Table 2 further delineates the structure of the program by giving a diagram of the training model.

Insert Table 2 about here

The organizational base of the training consisted of three training modules for each of the three groups of participating classroom personnel. Training was provided primarily by the program coordinator with powerful input from three program consultants. Each program consultant was responsible for training materials in one of the three components (early childhood, regular education, or paraprofessional) in which she had expertise. Participants received either continuing education credit, three hours of undergraduate or three hours of graduate credit in special education, depending upon their educational need or status.

Program Goals and Objectives. The goals of the program were:

1. To train regular classroom teachers to work effectively with handicapped children in the regular classroom setting, and to develop positive attitudes toward working with handicapped children.

2. To train early childhood teachers as diagnostic remedial specialists in order that they may identify children with potential problems at an early age, make appropriate referrals and develop programs for those children who can be served in the regular classroom setting.

3. To train paraprofessionals to work effectively with handicapped children as a part of the educational team.

4. To develop and test an inservice training model that may be used by the public schools.

Specific objectives of program training included the development of:

1. Positive and humanistic attitudes toward handicapped children.

2. An understanding of the characteristics and behaviors of handicapped children.

3. Skills and techniques for teaching handicapped children.

4. Skills necessary for the completion of individualized educational programs (IEP).

5. An understanding of the abilities and disabilities of children with handicaps.

6. Skills needed to work as part of an educational team.

7. Skills needed to effectively manage classroom behavior.

Description of Training Modules. Three modules were developed for each training group. The following is a general description of the training modules developed by program staff and utilized in the training of the program participants:

MODULE I:

- Established theoretical foundations by introducing participants to the concept of exceptionality and the characteristics and behaviors of handicapped children.

- Provided an opportunity for participants to clarify their attitudes toward the handicapped and provided training in how to positively influence the attitudes of nonhandicapped students toward handicapped students.

- Presented the laws affecting the education of handicapped individuals.
- Included planned observations of handicapped children in the classroom on videotape and film.

MODULE II:

- Presented a variety of techniques to observe and record the behavior of children.
- Provided opportunities for participants to translate diagnostic information into educational programs.
- Presented pertinent information and procedures for the development of individualized education plans.
- Provided opportunities for participants to develop teaching strategies based on diagnostic profiles and to apply these skills in the classroom.

MODULE III:

- Presented and encouraged participants to use a variety of behavior management techniques.
- Acquainted participants with a wide variety of resources designed to help meet the needs of the handicapped.
- Provided opportunities for participants to sharpen the interaction skills necessary for effective participation on an educational team.

Training Activities. Training activities were designed to allow program participants to translate theoretical knowledge into actual classroom practices. In addition to module dissemination, readings, lectures, oral presentations, and simulations, training activities included the following:

A. A survey by program participants of teacher attitudes toward mainstreamed students in their respective schools.

B. Development of a student profile and diagnostic picture.

C. Development of individualized education plans.

D. Development of behavior management programs.

E. Development of educational packets designed to teach skills to mildly handicapped students.

Further attempts to individualize program training to meet the specific needs of each participant included: (1) arrangements to have teachers observe children with a variety of handicapping conditions and a variety of programs in special schools; (2) extra on-site visitations to teachers who were transferred from regular classrooms to resource room settings; and (3) supplemental individual training sessions for participants who required additional assistance and/or review of information.

On-Site Visitations to Program Participants. An integral and most vital part of the program training consisted of on-site classroom visitations to participants by the program coordinator. The purpose of these visits was to:

1. Observe regular and early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals in their professional settings and to ensure the carry over of training objectives into the classroom.
2. Suggest areas for modification and improvement.
3. Assist regular and early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals in remedying specific education and learning problems.
4. Provide recommendations and techniques for dealing with mildly handicapped students or students experiencing learning difficulties.
5. Consult with participants to ascertain reaction to program training and to ascertain specific areas of difficulty or concern with which the participants might desire assistance.

Evaluation of Program Participants

Evaluation techniques were designed to provide feedback on program content, implementation and value to participants, as well as feedback on actual teacher change as a result of the training.

To ascertain participant growth in the general area of special education, a global pre/post test was administered to participants prior to the beginning of training and again at the completion of the training. The test included questions related to definitions and incidences of handicapping conditions, characteristics of children with various handicapping conditions and recent legisla-

tion affecting the education of handicapped students. Test questions were submitted to five experts in the field of special education (University professors) to ascertain the content or face validity of the questions included in the pre/post test. Scores for early childhood and regular classroom teachers ranged from 58-74 on the pre-test. One hundred points was the maximum score possible, and 68 was the mean score obtained on the pre-test. Scores on the post-test ranged from 72 to 100, with a mean score of 84.3. The mean increase in post-test scores was 15 points for regular and early childhood educators. Scores for paraprofessionals ranged from 46-78, with a mean of 60.4. Post-test scores ranged from 62-94, with the mean score being 78.6. The mean increase in post-test scores was 13.7 for paraprofessionals.

In addition to pre/post test scores, growth of the project participants was measured by assessing their skill in completing I.E.P.'s and the quality of educational packets they constructed for mildly handicapped students.

Transference of program skills into actual classroom settings was determined through visits to the classrooms of regular and early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals participating in the training. An observation form which was developed by the program staff was used to evaluate the participants. Results of the evaluation indicated that participants were more confident, made positive changes in their methods of discipline, improved in their ability to observe and informally diagnose, and most importantly, increased their ability to design and implement educational programs for handicapped as well as normal students.

Evaluation of Training by Program Participants

Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of each training component by indicating their degree of agreement or disagreement with a list of statements. A rating of "0" indicated strong disagreement. A rating of "7"

indicated strong agreement with the statement. The evaluation statement rated the lowest (mean of 6.09) was the use of audio-visual aids in the training, and the evaluation statement rated the highest (mean of 6.65) was the encouragement of questions and input from participants by the trainer. The training component rated the lowest was the strategies component (mean of 6.11) and the training component rated the highest was the characteristics of handicapping conditions (mean of 6.55). Although ratings varied for evaluation statements on all six training components there were no significant differences at the .05 level between the mean scores of any of the components, Table 3 lists all of the evaluation statements to which the 1980-81 participants were asked to respond, the component or training session to which the statement referred and the mean rating given the statement. Comparable ratings by prior groups are non existent, since this instrument was first used with the 1980-81 participants.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion

The three year training program produced some positive, yet perplexing results in regard to the inservice training of paraprofessionals, regular, and early childhood educators.

Use of the modular approach was effective in providing each training group with the necessary individual attention, degree of autonomy, and the non-threatening learning atmosphere that each group needed to be effective, efficient learners. Paraprofessionals were not threatened by regular and early childhood educators, who were in most cases, more experienced and educated. All groups met for one session per month with their peers and once with the total group; this method of training gave each group a sense of focusing on problems that their particular group faced and increased participation and motivation of the groups.

The offering of continuing education units, undergraduate credit or graduate credit in special education for inservice training proved to be a large incentive to program participants. The idea of receiving credit appeared to be largely responsible for the increased teacher interest in the last year of the training effort.

On-site consultation to program participants also proved to be very beneficial. In the past, a number of studies (Hermanowicz, 1968; Joyce, Howey, & Yarger, 1977) documented the discontent with inservice teacher education, primarily because of the lack of relevance. In the present program all of the educators felt very involved as a result of on-site visits by program staff. The majority of participants commented that the training was very relevant, since it often helped them to solve the day to day problems that they were having with students in their classroom. It should be noted that providing on-site consultation to participants was one of the strongest facets of the inservice training model. As a result, it is strongly suggested that future inservice programs provide: (1) the opportunity for teachers to realistically apply what they learn in training sessions to their own classrooms; and (2) an avenue for monitoring and reinforcing the teacher's applications.

The meeting of the three groups on the Univeristy campus also proved effective. Originally the training was to take place in designated schools, however, a majority of the participants found that the University was more centrally located and as a result preferred to meet on the campus. It should be noted that some participants disagreed and felt that meeting in their own school was more convenient and made them feel more at ease. The authors conclude that meeting in either a public school classroom or a University classroom has its advantages and disadvantages; however, the place that is more convenient and where most participants feel at ease should weigh heavily in making a decision as to where to hold the training.

While the inservice training program produced many positive changes in teachers and paraprofessionals, there were also a number of problems that developed. The primary problem with the present model was the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. All instruments used in the evaluation process were developed by program staff, and thus the question of the validity and reliability of some of the instruments still remains largely unaddressed. As explained earlier there was an attempt to establish content or face validity on some of the instruments used; however, it must be noted that the evaluation phase of the program was perhaps the weakness section, and as a result more time and study should be devoted in the future to strengthening the evaluation instruments that were used in the program.

Secondly, notification of regular and early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals of the availability of the program was a problem. Originally information was sent to the superintendents of seven (7) school districts who were to pass it on to the special education supervisor of each district. The district supervisor was to make the information available to all teachers. As the time to initiate the program approached, the program staff made direct contact with individual schools and discovered that a large number of teachers were interested, but that they had never heard of the program. Consequently, in subsequent years, more emphasis was placed on the use of radio, television, and newspapers to get the news to interested participants. Printed brochures of the training (with the consent of the school superintendents) were also handed out to prospective participants to help alleviate the communication problem. As a result of the communication problems incurred, the authors strongly suggest that the inservice trainer convey to the school superintendent or his/her designee the importance of informing all of the teachers of the availability of inservice

training opportunities, and that the inservice trainer follow-up the recommendation by making personal visits to the office of the superintendent or the designated official.

Conclusions

The inservice training program raised some questions, primarily with evaluation, that must be addressed; however, the three-year effort proved that the modular approach, on-site consultation and in class observation by program staff, and the individual meeting of the three training groups, were successful methods to use to provide special education training to regular education personnel. Moreover, it is suggested that inservice trainers and public school administrators in particular investigate the program presented thoroughly, and use the total or appropriate components of the training model to assist them in training unprepared teachers and paraprofessionals to work with handicapped children in their classrooms. A thorough effort on the part of training personnel should help them to avoid many of the errors of past inservice training programs, and thereby save time and money. But most importantly, the use of an effective inservice training model should aid educators to better serve the increasing number of handicapped children that will continue to be mainstreamed into regular classes.

References

Alberto, P.A., Castricone, N.R., & Cohen, S.B. Mainstreaming: Implications for training regular class teachers. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded, 1978, 13(1), 90-92.

Flynn, J.R., Gacka, R.C., & Sundean, D.A. Are classroom teachers prepared for mainstreaming? Phi Delta Kappan, 1978, 59(8), 562.

Hermanowicz, H. Teacher education: An exploration of efforts and proposals for its improvement. Springfield, Ill.: Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1968. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 030 589).

Little, T.L. Training special education support personnel. The Teacher Educator, 1977, 13(2), 23-27.

Mori, A.A. The handicapped child in the mainstream - new roles for the regular educator. Education, 1979, 99(3), 243-249.

Ryor, J. 94-142 - The perspective of regular education. Learning Disability Quarterly, 1978, 1(2), 6-14.

Joyce, B., Howey, K., & Yarger, S. Special education and teacher education. Special Education and Teacher Education, 1977, 1(1), 67-75.

Footnote

This program was supported in part by Grant No. 451AH80925 from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, U.S.O.E., Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Division of Personnel Preparation, Washington, D.C.

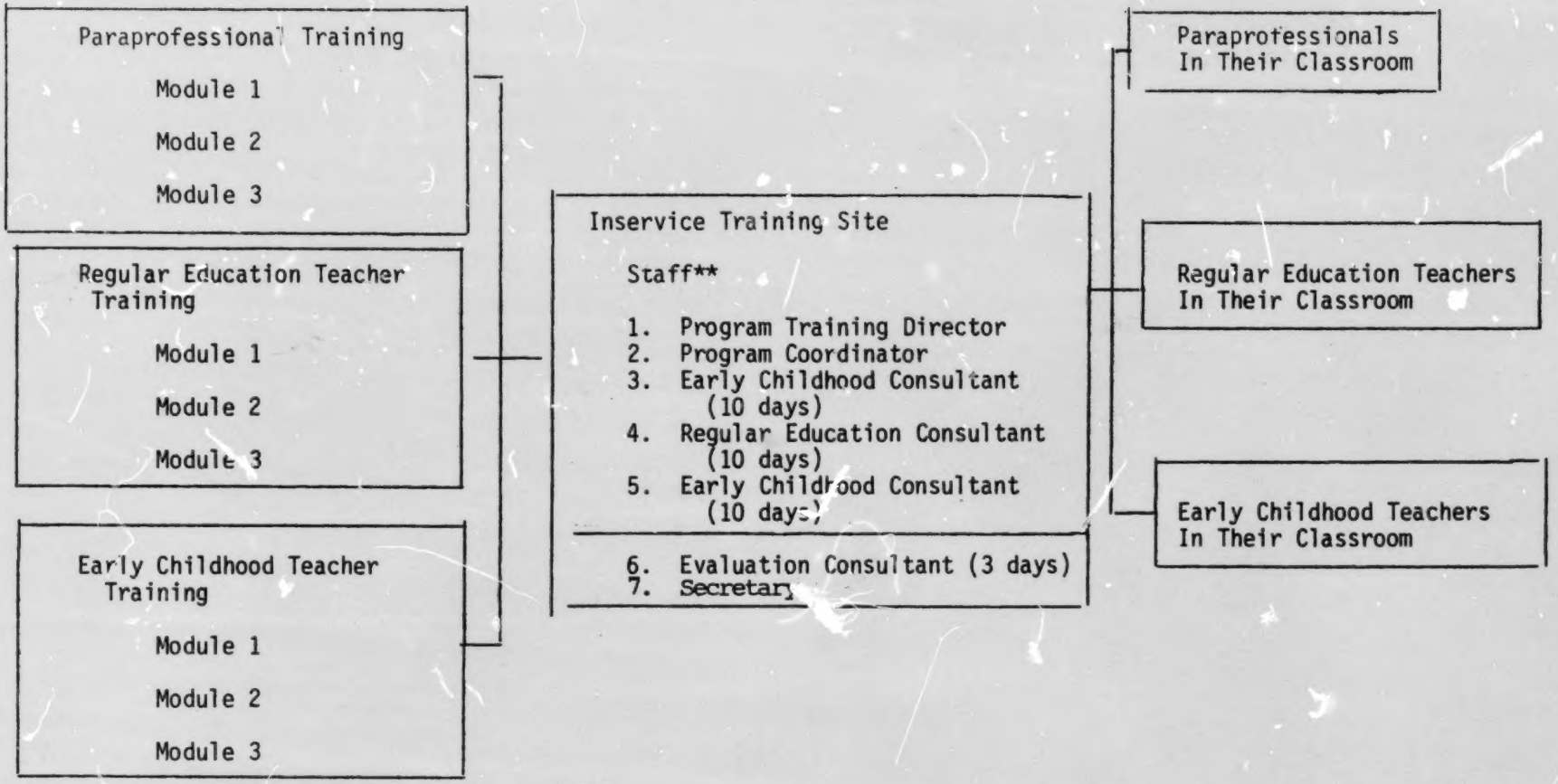
TABLE 1

Participants Trained in a Three Year Period (1978-1981)

1978-1979	1979-1980	1980-1981	Totals
Paraprofessionals (6)	Paraprofessionals (6)	Paraprofessionals (6)	Paraprofessionals (18)
Regular Educators (10)	Regular Educators (10)	Regular Educators (17)	Regular Educators (37)
Early Childhood Educators (9)	Early Childhood Educators (9)	Early Childhood Educators (17)	Early Childhood Educators (35)
			TOTAL PARTICIPANTS (90)

Table 2

Inservice Training Model



*Each group (paraprofessional, regular and early childhood) attends one session as an individual group per month, and one session as a total group per month.

**Program staff conducts on-site consultation and evaluation of program participants in their classroom, consultation is provided primarily by the program coordinator.

Table 3

Summary of Ratings+ of Inservice Training Components by 1980-81 (N=30) Program Participants

Evaluation Statements	Training Component (1) Attitudes Toward the Handicapped	Training Component (2) Characteristics of Handicapping Conditions	Training Component (3) Legislation Affecting the Handicapped	Training Component (4) The Individualized Education Plan	Training Component (5) Behavior Management	Training Component (6) Strategies for Teaching the Handicapped	Mean for Evaluation Statements
Objectives for this training were clearly stated	6.79	6.52	6.37	6.55	6.54	6.05	6.47
Instruction for the component session was organized	6.55	6.36	6.20	6.33	6.25	6.26	6.33
The facilitator* was helpful	6.89	6.71	6.25	6.50	6.56	6.36	6.55
The material learned from the training component will be useful	6.82	6.77	6.62	6.33	6.62	5.89	6.51
The facilitator assisted the participants as much as possible	6.82	6.54	6.37	6.66	6.66	6.26	6.55

14

Table 3 Continued

Summary of Ratings+ of Inservice Training Components by 1980-81 (N=30) Program Participants

	Training Component (1)	Training Component (2)	Training Component (3)	Training Component (4)	Training Component (5)	Training Component (6)	
Evaluation Statements	Attitudes Toward the Handicapped	Characteristics of Handicapping Conditions	Legislation Affecting the Handicapped	The Individualized Education Plan	Behavior Management	Strategies for Teaching the Handicapped	Mean for Evaluation Statements
Audio-visual materials adequate and appropriate for the component	6.44	6.00	6.12	5.66	6.29	6.05	6.09
The enabling activities for this component were well chosen and appropriate	6.62	6.63	6.60	6.44	6.13	5.78	6.37
The facilitator* encouraged questions and input from participants	7.00	6.86	6.62	6.55	6.66	6.21	6.65
Averages	6.19	6.55	6.39	6.38	6.46	6.11	

*Facilitator referred to the instructor.
+Ratings were based on a seven point scale: 1-2, partially agree or somewhat agree; 3-4, not sure, do not know or neutral; 5-6, agree to some extent, but not completely; 7, totally agree.